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Patterns of middle class alcohol use: habituses of 'home' and 'traditional' drinking among professional, managerial and clerical workers.

Abstract

Evidence suggests that alcohol consumption among those in middle class occupations consistently exceeds safe levels, yet there is little research into why this occurs. This paper explores the meanings associated with alcohol use among professional, managerial and clerical workers. Qualitative data were collected from five focus groups comprising male and female employees of from 21-55 years of age (N=49: 32 male, 17 female). Each focus group was conducted at a medium or large scale employer's premises, four of which were in the public sector and one in the private sector, within the north east of England. Using Bourdieu's concepts of 'habitus', 'cultural capital' and 'symbolic power' we found that, among these middle class occupational groups, alcohol use was associated with two habituses: a 'home drinking' habitus and a 'traditional drinking' habitus. Those of the home drinking habitus particularly used wine as a source of cultural capital and a means of distinction, rendering its regular consumption acceptable, whereas the traditional habitus preferred to drink lagers, beers and spirits in social settings, primarily at the weekends. Such differentiated drinking patterns suggest that existing public health initiatives designed to reduce alcohol consumption may require modification to accommodate both drinking cultures.

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Introduction

A recent study of drinking patterns in England showed that 69 per cent of men and 55 per cent of women (aged 16 and over) reported drinking an alcoholic drink on at least one day in the week prior to interview (Office for National Statistics, 2011). Similarly, a European survey of investigating excess levels of alcohol consumption (TNS, 2010) found that UK residents were the most likely to report consuming 10 or more alcoholic drinks on days when they consumed alcohol. Such levels of consumption, however, are not evenly distributed across socio-economic groups. In the UK, households with an adult working in a managerial or professional capacity had the highest proportion of alcohol consumption in the previous seven days (men 78 per cent and women 66 per

cent ,TNS 2010:18). By contrast, men and women in routine and manual households had the lowest proportion of alcohol consumption in the same period (60 per cent and 45 per cent respectively).

Those in occupational roles involving significant amounts of psychological pressure (such as managers) report using alcohol as a way to relieve stress (Turnage & Spielberger, 1991, Kuntsche *et al.* 2006) and a consistent, though weak, positive relationship exists between the frequency of heavy drinking and the number of reported stressors, with work-related stressors having the strongest association with alcohol consumption (Dawson *et al.* 2005). Home drinking in particular is typically viewed by drinkers as a means of stress reduction and a coping mechanism, while drinking in social situations, such as with colleagues, is perceived as aiding interaction with friends (Abbey *et al.*, 1993; Stewart & Zeitlin, 1995; 4Children 2012).

Despite likely differences in consumption to other groups, to date there is little in the literature exploring the patterns of alcohol consumption among middle class groups. Marmot (1997) concludes that wine drinking is preferentially consumed by those of higher status and that 'there are higher levels of moderate drinking in higher grades', and 'high consumption of wine is more likely to be associated with daily moderate drinking rather than binge drinking' (Marmot 1997:5). Indeed, a high rate of alcohol consumption among higher socioeconomic groups is a particular cause for concern because as Rossow and Amundsen (1996) have demonstrated, such groups can be disadvantaged by their resilience. That is, higher socio economic status affords individuals resistance to the deleterious effects of alcohol, through their diet, exercise and other lifestyle factors, so that relevant services are not accessed until irreparable damage to health has occurred (see also Mäkelä *et al.* 2003, Voracek, 2004). This is a situation compounded by the nature of alcohol itself, since it is not the substance itself, but the dose that harms, enabling tolerance and toxicity to blend imperceptibly (Heath 2000; Battey *et al.* 2009; Emslie *et al.* 2011).

Thus, there is general agreement that more complex theories of alcohol consumption are needed ,theories which address the contexts of alcohol consumption and the meanings associated with it (Abbey *et al.* 1993). As the historian Brennan (1989) argues, '...the emphasis on quantifying consumption suffers from mistaken assumptions and leads to an inadequate understanding of the social role of alcohol. The problems with quantification illustrate the need for a greater awareness of, and investigation into, the cultural aspects of alcohol.' (Brennan, 1989:71). The aim of this study was to explore the attitudes, meanings and behaviours of professional, managerial and clerical employees in relation to alcohol consumption. Five focus groups were conducted in different organisations in the north east of England. In order to begin to develop a cultural understanding of alcohol use among middle class occupational groups the data were analysed using the conceptual

framework of Pierre Bourdieu (1985).

Bourdieu: 'habitus' and 'distinction'

In his work on distinction and taste, Bourdieu (1985) argues that individuals make choices about how to live in relation to their relative positions within the class hierarchy. Such choices are often manifest in nuanced differences in everyday behaviours. Thus Bourdieu found that 1970s France was characterised by marked differences across the social hierarchy in spending patterns on food and drink products and in relation to various habits. So whilst clerical workers spent less money on food than manual workers in absolute terms (even though they earned slightly more), clerical workers spent more on cosmetics, leisure and clothing. Bourdieu recognises that such choices can of course be the product of economic capital; that is, having more or less money to spend on essential items such as food and drink. However, Bourdieu argues that once individuals have obtained 'distance from necessity' and have their fundamental survival needs met, practices become 'symbolically marked' and indicate the accumulation of smaller and larger amounts of 'cultural capital': that is, the tastes and habits characteristic of the dominating class. Such capital is accumulated within and expressed through aesthetic and cognitive practices such as art, music, leisure, dress and language. Differential spending practices within closely related pay scales enable individuals to construct their social identity by distinguishing themselves from others. So, Bourdieu found that executives, professionals and big employers distinguished themselves from those lower in the social hierarchy by choosing fish rather than meat (meat being the choice of the labouring classes), grilling as opposed to boiling and fresh vegetables as opposed to bread when offered those choices. For Bourdieu, tastes in food and drink are not divorced from other dimensions of our relationship to the world but are integral to where we are (or where we think we are) within the social order.

When such practices are a collective activity they circumscribe and indicate a distinct habitus: the sum of social structuring influences upon a social group or class which result in a distinctive set of practices and perceptions allied to a set of values (Bourdieu 1990). As a means of symbolic boundary making, separating individuals occupying various positions on the class hierarchy, collective practices and the habituses they signify are neither fixed entities nor deterministic. Rather, habitus is something in flux, as individuals and groups actively choose how to use these values to distinguish themselves from others. Habitus represents a '...generating principle of style... a common framework within which the members of the group understand their own and each other's actions' (Sulkunen 1982:108). Habitus enables individuals to define themselves in terms of certain values and practices

and not others and thus attach themselves to a specific lifestyle. It is a field where positions are contested, and advanced (or lost) by the more or less successful accumulation of both economic and cultural capital.

The 'new' middle classes

Bourdieu claims the greatest accumulation of cultural capital resides with the intellectual class. Their practice of 'aesthetic ascetism', that is, a non extravagant awareness of appropriate self adornment, is especially evident in eating and drinking rituals. However, it is the lifestyle of the 'new' middle classes, or service class, that incite the best and most sensitive analysis of cultural capital (Wynne 1998). This group, occupying the space between the bourgeoisie, as the dominant class, and the working class, is attached to the finer distinctions between practices so as to distinguish themselves from others, especially those adjacent socio-economic groups aspiring to their status. Those occupying the lowest positions within these intermediate strata are the ones who, in particular, seek a rupture with traditional practices, to increase their capital and further realise their aspirations for social ascendancy. Choices over food, drink, dress, leisure and so on, are thus indicative of social locations and mobility within the class hierarchy since what constitutes cultural capital is constantly constructed and modified. As the dominated classes adopt the practices of the dominant the latter devise ever more novel forms of capital to maintain their 'distinction': capital that is shared by everyone ceases to be capital at all.

In the present study, participants were asked to discuss alcohol and its relationship to their working and home life.. Analysing their accounts using the concept of 'habitus' provides a framework whereby sense may be made of their consumption of alcohol , and perhaps offer insight into instances of over consumption. Whilst governments and public health officials point to the 'irrationality' of such drinking practices, an analysis informed by Bourdieu enables us to establish the 'logic of practice', of professional, managerial and clerical workers (ONS 2009).

In what follows we primarily focus upon the nature of home drinking. Traditional drinking patterns, associated with consuming large amounts of alcohol in social settings, are well documented in the literature and provide the rationale existing harm reduction strategies and public health messages (Szmigin et al 2008, Elmeland and Kolind 2012, DoH 2012). The nature of home drinking, however, has not yet been analysed in detail. Whilst there is recognition that the context of drinking has changed with home drinking becoming more widely practiced, those studies that address home drinking have not gone beyond describing the stated reasons and motivations of individuals for engaging in the practice (Foster et al 2010). Whilst valuable, such analysis does not go far enough

since socio-economic and cultural influences, which may exist beyond individual consciousness, are not addressed. This study looks at patterns of drinking and the meanings attached to such drinking patterns by professional, managerial and clerical employees who worked full-time - at least 35 hours per week.

Methods

This study was funded by the Stockton-on-Tees NHS Public Health Directorate. The research aims were: the identification of consumption habits, the perceived benefits of alcohol consumption, the perceived benefits of a reduction in alcohol consumption, factors perceived as influencing alcohol consumption, the mechanics of awareness-raising on alcohol units and how the workplace may support a safe drinking culture. Findings were collated into a report for the funder.

Sample

All organisations were medium to large organisations based in the north east of England. All had an existing relationship with Stockton-on-Tees NHS Public Health Directorate which assisted the research team with gaining access to the workforce. A total of 49 people (32 female, 17 male) took part. Participation was voluntary, with participants choosing to respond to an internally circulated e mail and there was thus a measure of self selection within the sample. Ages ranged from 21 to 55 years (recorded on consent forms) and employment status ranged from junior members of staff, including office staff to senior management. Participants' ethnic origin was not sought as part of the study and all of Group 1 participants were female. Focus Groups 1 and 2 took place at local government offices, Group 3 at a chemical storage company, Group 4 at a prison and Group 5 at a taxation office. The study was introduced to employees and recruitment made via the Human Resources department of each organisation. At the time of the study Human Resources was already engaged in alcohol reduction training and 'alcohol in the workplace' interventions, and the organisations concerned were involved with the 'Better Health at Work' scheme.

Ethics

Ethical considerations were of central concern to the project. Participants were given an overview of the research aims to enable them to give fully informed written consent. Ground rules were established at the start of each group to ensure confidentiality and maintain mutual respect. As there would be a potential personal risk to participants from revealing alcohol misuse in front of colleagues from the same workplace, they were advised that they were not expected to reveal any

personally sensitive information. Ethical approval was granted by the [name of institution] Research Ethics Panel

Data collection

Data were collected by two facilitators via five focus groups, during lunch breaks and with employees from that employment location only. Participants ate their lunch whilst the focus group was under way, potentially creating a more informal atmosphere. Participants sat around tables facing each other and no one left or entered the room whilst discussions were taking place. Focus groups ranged in size from 8 to 12 people. Before each focus group began, participants were given an overview of the research aims to enable provision of informed written consent and ground rules were established to. Focus groups lasted between 40 and 75 minutes. Four of the five focus groups were conducted by the same two facilitators (one male, one female). The fifth and final focus group was conducted by one of the original facilitators and a new facilitator (both male). The open-ended nature of the questions around the loosely constructed themes of lifestyle behaviours, drinking in the home, variations in consumption through the week and the relationship between drinking and work enabled members of the focus groups to raise issues of significance to them, as well as exploring areas of agreement and disagreement. As the researchers did not proceed from a predetermined agenda but continually reframed the discussions in light of emerging concepts, focus groups were considered the most appropriate method of data collection.

Analysis

The focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, with personal information anonymised prior to analysis. Following initial analysis by the group facilitators and discussion by the research team, data were then analysed by a member of the research team not involved in the data collection process for emergent themes across all five focus groups. Such analysis revealed the presence of two distinct drinking patterns being described among professional, managerial and clerical workers. Using Bourdieu's concept of habitus, these two distinct patterns were made more fully visible and associated perceptions, attitudes and meanings were mapped onto each habitus. The quotations from participants used below sit a little in excess of a 2:1 ratio, female to male (19/8), and thus the quotations used broadly represent the gender ratio of the sample (32:17). Analysis showed the relevance of Bourdieu's notions of 'distinction', 'cultural capital' and 'symbolic power' in making sense of the data.

Limitations

Each focus group included one or more member of staff from the Human Resources or Occupational

Health department which may have led to particular contributions (or a lack of contributions) from other participants and shaped the direction of discussions. Our data thus represent what participants were prepared to discuss or reveal during group interaction with work colleagues and, in some cases, superiors. Therefore, these data indicate what is seen as acceptable practice around alcohol consumption. Revealing perceptions of acceptable practice is valuable as perceptions of normative practice are important for harm reduction interventions. Further, the framing of actors' accounts is itself related to occupational background (Katainen 2010) and may thus also be constitutive of habitus. As with much alcohol research, this study relied upon self reporting which has been shown to result in under reporting of consumption (Midanick 1989, Stockwell 2004). That said, our study is strengthened by the fact that levels of alcohol consumption were not the main line of enquiry but attitudes surrounding its use were. This study was conducted within the north east of England which has a culture of heavy drinking like many other regions of the U.K. Thus although our results may not be applicable everywhere there is good reason to believe that similar attitudes are likely to be held in many other places.

Findings

The role of alcohol in constructing 'habitus'

Habitus: 'home drinking' versus 'traditional drinking'.

Two patterns of alcohol consumption emerged from our data and each pattern was associated with a distinct set of beliefs and meanings among working professionals. The first was a 'traditional' drinking pattern associated with drinking beer, lager and spirits, mainly at weekends, in pubs and clubs, sometimes in the homes of others and in 'large' quantities was found. This drinking pattern was based upon sociability, having fun and a return to youthful behaviours. A second pattern of 'home' drinking could also be detected and this was practiced by a different group of individuals within the sample. This was one characterised by the consumption of alcohol in participants' own homes mainly wine (but not exclusively), in moderate amounts, at regular intervals throughout the week, often with meals and as part of domestic and family life. Such regular home drinking was portrayed as respectable and moderate and when it involved wine it was further associated with notions of sophistication. When lager, beer or spirits were drunk at home, a phenomenon that was reported far less frequently, they were consumed in the same way as wine; that is moderately, regularly, throughout the week and as part of domestic and family life. Alongside these two drinking

patterns were different orientations to the past, present and future, to notions of taste and time and attitudes regarding individual liberty, responsibility and authority.

Responses illustrating the two habituses were taken from all five focus groups, from males and females of varying ages and at different life stages indicating that drinking attitudes and practices are not the product of demographics alone. Within the responses there appeared to be participants who may be called 'landmark individuals' (Warde et al. 2008). That is, that is, participants who seemed to represent most fully one or other of the habituses and displayed the majority of attitudes and practices associated with that habitus. These individuals were focused upon in the analysis to delineate more clearly the parameters of each habitus.

'Liminal time', 'habitual transitions' and 'distinction' in the home drinking habitus

Home wine drinking was associated with meals, especially Italian food, family time and occasionally with home cooking. In some instances wine was not drunk every night in order to keep it "special", but in many cases wine was drunk very regularly, in some cases every evening. In the home, both male and female participants described using wine to relax, unwind and alleviate stress. Regular home wine drinking was perceived as less of a problem and more acceptable by inhabitants of the home drinking habitus than the social, weekend drinking of beer, lager and spirits, associated with the traditional habitus and among the home drinking habitus the consumption of 'moderate' amounts was regularly alluded to:

Relax have a glass of wine, yeah had a bad day, but not to excess I don't think on a week night rather than a weekend.

One glass of wine [and] that's it I'm alright now.

It's a bit of a treat I think you know Friday night I think 'Right I will have a treat' my glass of wine or two glasses of wine, whatever... [Exchange between two female participants in Focus group 5]

Wine drinking at home was further used to mediate multiple identities and roles, signalling a transition from one part of the day, or a task, to another, and was usually consumed after the fulfilment of domestic responsibilities. So, for some participants, chores would be completed and children would be put to bed before sitting down with a drink. As such, wine drinking at home acted as a marker of 'liminal time'-that space between 'work time' and 'relaxation time', between 'family

time' and free or 'adult time' as well as marking habitual transitions, from 'responsible parent' to 'autonomous adult' and from 'employee' to 'free agent'. Some participants reported having a drink as soon as they came home from work, especially on a Friday evening when they did not have to get up for work the next day. Thus wine acted as a marker between different time periods within the day or week. Wine was a means of signalling the end of the working day or week, of drawing a line under it, of marking the advent of liberty and an expression of free choice. It reaffirmed an identity as "adult":

I definitely have a drink [of wine, mentioned elsewhere in the discussion] on Fridays on early evening when I come in from work because I think, I do sort of deserve that...it's my time.
[Focus group 1, female]

We know people who we work with who sit and have a glass of wine after the kids have gone to bed and go through a bottle of wine quite easily and I don't really think that's uncommon nowadays you know, it's used as a relaxation method, especially with people with children I think. [Focus group 1, female]

[At] supermarkets you can get a nice bottle of wine for £5 ...so it's more accessible and it's easier and it's more comfortable in your own environment... I drink... because it actually makes you feel like an adult again. [Focus group 3, male]

Home drinking was something participants reported having engaged in for several years and many were unable to recall when they had started the practice or where the idea came from. Whilst some claimed their drinking pattern was inherited from the previous generation, for others, this definitely was not the case, as they reported that their drinking pattern was distinctly different from that of their parents. Whatever its origin, home wine drinking was spoken of as habitual and embedded in lifestyles, even taking the form of a ritual or a 'reflex' for some:

... if I want to sit down and have a glass of wine that's exactly what I will do,... I haven't drank all week and it's my time, I've got no work for the next two days... I think I've done that for years to be honest, I don't even know where that's come from, just one of those things you know,

[Facilitator] *Like habit.*

Yeah, like a ritual thing yeah.

[Interchange between facilitator and female participant in Focus group 1]

Wine possessed the power to transform almost any activity, conferring sociability on a couple's time together, one participant claiming, "...it's [wine drinking at home] still sociable with your husband". Similarly, drinking wine at home in the winter or in the garden in summer were both described by one participant as being intrinsically social activities, transforming a private space into a public one;

There is nothing nicer... than sitting down on a night time when you've finished work with a nice glass of wine and it works both ways, in winter time you draw the curtains and you think oh this is lovely and put your feet up with a glass of wine and in summer time you're sitting outside in the sunshine and you've got a nice cold glass of wine, so you know it is, social isn't it? [Focus group 4, female]

Indeed, wine had the ability to confer good taste upon any activity, transforming a banal, routine activity into something special. Wine was described as "going nicely" with European dishes and turned a "basic" meal into a "nice" one the following comment being made by a participant who said they never went out socially:

"...[my husband and I]... cook a nice meal, have a nice glass of wine, and earlier in the week when we try not to drink so much or at all, we have to have more basic meals, because to me a nice meal just goes with a nice glass of wine. [Focus group 4, female]

Similarly, wine transformed the same evening meal from "tea", something every day or perhaps a meal associated with young children, into "dinner", something special and engaged in by adults only. Wine also transformed a meal at home with friends into "a dinner party" (Focus group 4, female):

"when you go home and you're having your tea and it's like oh have a glass of wine with your dinner...." [Focus group 4, female]

Wine was portrayed as a sophisticated drink, with experiences of the Continent and European cultural practices being drawn upon to both explain and legitimate its consumption:

"You look to [the] continent, I mean me - being brought up in Germany - I had wine from a certain age with a meal. It wasn't much but it was that kind of culture it was sophisticated almost you felt bigger because you were more mature and [had] more responsibilities" [Focus group 2, female]

Having fun and a 'return to youth' in the traditional drinking habitus

By contrast, alcohol consumption in the traditional habitus was associated with having fun and being young and was engaged in by older as well as and younger participants and by men and women. For older participants within the traditional habitus, drinking socially enabled them to experience a "second wave" of teen years, now that their children had grown up. Drinking alcohol was especially associated with weekends and quantity was important:

I hit at least 12 bars that day and drank from silly o'clock in the morning to silly o'clock at night 'cos we just fancied it, and we can and so we did it, we set off, boiling hot day and hit every pub in [town] I think. [Focus group 4, male]

For some younger participants, the advent of parental responsibilities signalled a change in pattern from traditional drinking to home drinking, and thus migration from the traditional to the home drinking habitus:

I've got a little boy now ... my drinking habits I think have changed, whereas before it might have been more about the weekend...it's like oh have a glass of wine with your dinner... so it's become more about during the week now than maybe it was previously.[Focus group 4, female]

However, such migration was not inevitable and thus was not determined by age or life stage. Some younger participants in the study maintained continuity in drinking patterns despite a change in life circumstances. A younger man with a baby claimed that he and his wife still got "slaughtered" (very drunk) at least once each weekend and that ".... the lifestyle habits haven't changed that much, there is just no more lie-ins..."[Focus group 3, male] This pattern was, however, associated with the ready availability of overnight child care from grandparents living nearby and thus with a more traditional family pattern.

For those in the traditional habitus, pubs, clubs and the homes of friends were all considered suitable places to meet to drink and were places where socialising most frequently took place with partners as well as "mates". When going out with the purpose of eating a meal (as opposed to going out primarily to drink) those within the traditional habitus reported drinking beer with their meal rather than making a transition to wine or some other drink.

Constructing habitus through notions of 'taste' and time

Those in both habituses claimed they drank because they enjoyed the taste. Those of the traditional habitus claimed they drank lager and beer because they were able to "*quench your thirst*". Those in the home drinking habitus drank wine because it was "*lovely*" and "*hits the spot*". These differences in preferred taste accompanied differences in time orientation between the two habituses. Whereas the traditional habitus was associated with a retrospective time orientation, the home drinking habitus was more future oriented. One member of the traditional habitus claimed he wanted to be able look back at the end of his life and think "*that was a good night*" since drinking alcohol was not associated with control but with having "*belly laughs and the hilarity*", of having a "*mad*" or "*daft*" night. Home wine drinkers, by contrast, viewed the past as something to learn from rather than cherish. In this context, both role modeling from parents and individually "*knowing one's limits*" from experience, featured:

I personally look at [my]parents, just from the example that they've always set... my parents have a glass of wine every evening with their meal, it's probably very rarely that they would have a day where they didn't have a glass of wine... but... I've never seen any of them drunk in my life...that's where I get my... opinions from. (Female)

I think you learn your own lessons. (Male)

You do as well, yeah. (Female)

[You think]' I don't feel well', so you think 'I don't want to do this again'. I mean obviously some people don't. There are ...some people who just don't have those boundaries in themselves ... it's just different people isn't it? [Exchange between two participants in Focus group 5]

Home drinkers were more likely to reveal concerns about possible future consequences of excessive consumption of alcohol, such as changes in weight and appearance. The premature ageing potential of regular drinking was also alluded to by a participant who claimed to drink wine during the week:

I think ... a lot of the time the health issues are missed on people like ourselves that work every day and ... have a few glasses of wine throughout the week ... whereas I suppose for me something that would really put me off, is if I ...saw what I would look like down the line if I was to carry on those habits, and the effects it can have on your health in that way,

especially through aging and everything that would be something that would kind of make me think twice. [Focus group 4, female]

Constructing habitus through notions of authority, responsibility and liberty

Members of both habituses considered some aspects of employer alcohol policy, such as random alcohol testing, with suspicion, and as infringing both personal liberty and the rights of citizenship. There were nuanced differences however regarding the underpinning of these attitudes and thus served further to provide distinction between the two habituses. For members of the home drinking habitus comments tended to be couched in terms of an individual's responsibility to be "professional" at work and that there should be no "blanket rule" for alcohol consumption as it was inappropriate to put everyone in the same category. For home drinkers, being at work whilst suffering from moderate after effects of alcohol, such as being tired or having a mild hangover, were seen as unacceptable even if the person was otherwise functional. This was because being fit for work was evaluated in terms of optimum performance. One participant, who stated she mainly drank wine in the home, said:

you can stay within the limits but it's still not sensible if it's starting to affect other things, ... so if you've got a hangover you may only have had six units ... then to my mind, that isn't terribly professional. [Focus group 4, female]

Members of the traditional habitus, on the other hand, framed objections to employer intervention in terms of rights rather than responsibilities. They were more inclined to harbour a suspicion of the State, of medical professionals, such as GPs, and even their own work colleagues. This was coupled with a cynicism toward the evidence base for health messages on alcohol; for example, the U.K. government's evidence base for the number of alcohol units that can be safely consumed daily by men and women. For members of the traditional habitus the only justification for a policy such as random testing by employers was safety, *If you are driving or operating machinery...*[Focus group 2, male] but even in this context random testing was seen as having the potential to be exploited either by management or colleagues and evidenced a lack of trust. One participant, a university graduate, who revealed his traditional habitus membership by his preference for a Gin and Tonic whilst out socialising with friends, expressed these very anxieties:

...what if actually me and (name) have a personal vendetta against each other and it's used that way, it sounds like it's going to be discipline first, work out the reasons after [Focus group 2, male]

The right of individuals to regulate their own drinking within the traditional habitus was underpinned by a belief in individual metabolic differences regarding alcohol tolerance. Individual characteristics were considered of central importance in regulating alcohol intake and both of these views were juxtaposed to a fatalistic view of health:

...everyone's metabolism is different... the unit system, whilst a guideline, is crap really.

(Focus group 2, female)

"[you] just need to be fit for duty. What you do in your spare time is up to yourself as far as I'm concerned..." [Focus group 4, male]

"...it's almost like a lottery isn't it, in the same way you could develop a cancer because of drinking and other people get cancers and they never drink..." [Focus group 3, male]

By contrast, in response to a question from the focus group facilitator, members of home drinking habitus claimed that alcohol units did feature in their evaluation of their individual limits and in maintaining personal control. They also used the anticipation of how they would feel the next day as a regulator of consumption. State or employer intervention was considered acceptable however as a last resort:

"It would probably make me increase my intake a little bit... because... it is a motivator to keep it down... I keep a count every week." [Focus group 4, female]

...it's not being a nanny state...if people can't be responsible then to a certain extent I think you've got to take the responsibility away from them and say right well this is how it will be.[Focus group 2, female]

The traditional habitus was more closely associated with defiance against government, with an 'us' and 'them' attitude. Furthermore, the traditional habitus revealed some tolerance of lunch- time and after- work drinking (revealed in reminiscences of times past when such practices were regular features of the working week) those of the home wine drinking habitus generally regarded this as unacceptable in principle. The traditional habitus was more associated with perceptions of being "conned" by "our government", with alcohol being overly taxed and drink measures in pubs being too small:

If you were in Spain they give you gin and tonic, and you think 'that's a drink!' [Focus group 4, male]

Constructing habitus through motivations and meanings

The reasons and stated purpose given for drinking differed between habituses. For members of the home drinking habitus the purpose of remaining at home was not to get drunk or to drink per se. As already stated, wine drinking was embedded within domestic and family life, and thus accompanied and / or punctuated time between tasks and responsibilities. Home wine drinkers drank at home because they were already home, often fulfilling domestic responsibilities - they did not stay at home in order to drink. On the other hand, drinking outside the home, whilst associated with socialising, was more likely to be seen in terms of purposefully going out to drink or to get drunk by those in the traditional habitus. This view was, in fact, shared by those in the home drinking habitus and voiced as a reason for not taking part in such practices. Those in the traditional habitus had had less of a problem *"losing control"* and sought to *"...get like whoohoo"* when out drinking, whereas those in the home wine drinking habitus reported disliking that experience, though some liked *"feeling tipsy"*. One participant of the home drinking habitus claimed:

Binge drinking's not good- it's having a lot of vodka in one session. My understanding is you would be better to have a glass of wine a night than to have a bottle of wine, one night, Do you know am not that bothered actually, I enjoy one glass of wine... but that's it, I don't particularly like to feel drunk or feel sick or anything like that.[Focus group 4, female]

Participants pointed out that drinking at home *"felt different"* to drinking socially outside the home and that home drinking often led to drinking more as *"topping up"* was easy. Despite this wine was associated with moderate drinking, whereas beer, lager and spirits were associated with drinking to excess:

If my boyfriend goes out with his friends and [drink] shots of Sambuca ...whereas me and my friends would have wine...and still have a good drink but it wouldn't be so much as 'we are out to get drunk' night [Focus group 4, female].

Discussion

Our study showed that, among professional, managerial and clerical employees, two styles of alcohol consumption existed as part of two distinct habituses: a home drinking habitus strongly associated with wine drinking and a traditional habitus associated with the consumption of beer, lager or spirits outside of the home. We showed that home drinking, as an embedded practice in family and domestic life, marked liminal time (Oldenburg 1989) and defined and legitimated situations and behaviours. Perceived as functional and controlled, home drinking was considered *"unproblematic"* by those in the home drinking habitus. Drinking within the traditional habitus, by contrast, was associated with fun, a return to youthful patterns of behaviour, large quantities of alcohol at the weekends and sociability. Our analysis indicated that habitus transcends gender as it was possible to locate men and women within each habitus. We further found that, whilst individuals *may* migrate from one habitus to another with changed life circumstances we found no evidence of individuals freely travelling between habituses. Thus home drinkers, whilst they drank when out with friends or family for a meal etc, they did not drink large quantities when out socially, confined to the weekends. Similarly, those of the traditional habitus, who did report drinking at home, consumed, lager beer and spirits but not regularly throughout the week.

In particular, we found that wine in the home drinking habitus has the symbolic power to (re-) define a situation as *"nice"*, *"social"*, *"free"*, *"adult time"* or *"my time"*, transforming the home from a private to a social space, from an arena of responsibility to a place of leisure. This transformation enabled home drinking to be more easily legitimated as *"safe"* and *"sensible"*. Whilst home drinkers claimed to drink at home because of issues surrounding cost, convenience, safety, child care and stress, as a suitable accompaniment to meals or a result of non- smoking legislation (Foster et al 2010), such accounts are not synonymous with reasons, still less explanations. We argue that home drinking is part of a wider social space and as a sum of socio-structuring influences, a habitus, directs aesthetic choices below the level of consciousness (Bourdieu 1977). Thus, wine may indeed be considered the 'natural' drink of choice by those in the home drinking habitus, but such a choice serves to assert the position of individuals in the class hierarchy and constructs social identity.

Indeed, our study showed that wine conferred distinction upon home drinking as *"sophisticated"*, *"mature"* and *"moderate"*, it was a symbol of success and a manifestation of aspiration. Its transformative power stemmed from its ability to accrue cultural capital as a luxury product consumed regularly, sometimes daily, a justification made easily due to wine's multi faceted nature as food, drink and medicine (especially red wine). Among members of the home drinking habitus,

wine acted as a signifier of cultural capital, being used to confer 'distinction'. As Douglas (1987:8) has observed, drinking practices are often used to 'construct an ideal world' and Myerhoff (1986) claims that certain drinking practices, enable people to enact 'what they think they are' or 'what they [think they] should have been or may yet be' (Papagaroufali 1992:262). Thus, in this study, home drinking, particularly of wine, represented not only participants' perceptions of their status but also their status aspirations.

Further, our study showed that each pattern of alcohol consumption was part of a broader social space that incorporated different orientations to time and taste, notions of authority, responsibility and liberty as well as the motivations and meanings associated with drinking. This can be seen as part of the 'space of lifestyles' (Bourdieu 1984; Warde et al 2008). Thus, the home drinking habitus, as part of the changing context of alcohol consumption (Foster et al. 2010) represents an 'emergent phenomenon in contemporary taste' (Warde et al 2008 p 1066), one suggesting a shifting of middle class boundaries, a 'new middle' class, where distinction from traditional drinking practices are a mark of distinction. Exactly where this group sits in the social gradient is unclear, though the description of wine drinking as "nice" and "lovely" by those in the home drinking habitus, corresponds with terms identified by Bourdieu as characterizing the language of the "most culturally deprived fractions of the middle classes" (Bourdieu 1984: 50). Whilst the patterning of leisure among the upper middle classes according to occupational group has been demonstrated, that of the those more central and lower in the middle class hierarchy has not and this could prove a fruitful line of future inquiry (Wynne 2004).

Elements of the dominant culture are called upon by those of the home drinking habitus to create distinction. Of particular significance are the notions of restraint and the emphasis upon controlled drinking found in participants' descriptions of their wine consumption at home. Bourdieu notes that the ethic of sobriety is associated with the highest levels of the social hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1984, p 179). Restraint, or 'modesty' as Bourdieu terms it, is associated with the deferment of gratification not characteristic of the labouring classes 'who refuse to participate in the 'Benthamite' calculation of pleasures and pains, benefits and costs' (Bourdieu:180). Thus, regular, controlled and measured wine drinking was perceived by those of the home drinking habitus as respectable, as opposed to the drinking style of the traditional habitus which they perceived as hedonistic and excessive. Home drinking represented a 'dignity of conduct and correctness of manners' that accumulated for those who practiced it cultural capital. As with Bourdieu's observations regarding patterns of food consumption among different social groups in French society, form takes precedence over substance, so that it is not the quantity that one drinks (or can afford) but the quality, manner and

context in which it is drunk that determines its status conferring powers and acceptability. For those in the home drinking habitus, formality has invaded the once informal home and as Bourdieu puts it, 'true freedom [becomes identified] with the elective asceticism of self-imposed rule' (Bourdieu 1984: 199). Control and privacy become synonymous with sophistication. Here, 'seeming' takes priority over 'being' and the distinction between inside and outside the home, domestic and public is rejected. This dissolution of boundaries further rendered home drinking innocuous, at worst, as it did not compromise appearances. At best, it enabled a fleeting engagement with the dominant culture, an escape from 'the common present' (Bourdieu 1984:183).

The use of alcohol as a social and cultural marker is not new. Historically, wine has acted as a marker of distinction "even within exclusive, high-ranking circles" (Purcell 1994:193) and has been credited with possessing a transformative power in other contexts (McIntyre 2011). Wine has long been considered an eloquent choice, particularly so in Britain where its foreign and exotic origins bestow a sophisticated status (Engs, 1991). Nevertheless, when meanings and practices move across cultural boundaries, modification often results. We detect this in the home drinking habitus where wine was reportedly drunk in a very 'British' way: that is, in larger amounts than is typically found on the Continent. Why is this? The emergence of a home drinking culture is in part a socio- historical contingency: Britain shares with Scandinavia, Eastern Europe, Australia and North America (but not with Southern Europe) an ambivalent attitude toward alcohol. This attitude rests in part upon a paradox: in all these countries alcohol consumption per capita is not particularly high but alcohol consumption has long been regarded as problematic. This is despite the fact that a large proportion of these populations refrain from drinking at all (Heath 1995). Historically, these nations have often physically and visually concealed the consumption of alcohol behind solid doors, frosted glass and screened outdoor drinking areas, indicating cultures conflicted and at odds with their own value structures, a conflict underwritten by a common history of Protestantism and Temperance (Harrison 1971; Hofstadter 1962; Nicholls 2011). Ongoing stigma associated with alcohol was evidenced in this study by the admission that the alcohol problems of individuals were "*never mentioned, it's never spoken about, it's like such a stigma, such a taboo*"[Focus group 5]. Thus, stigma surrounding alcohol may serve to reinforce patterns of home drinking as 'respectable' in some national contexts by continuing the cultural practice of bestowing a cloak of invisibility upon a morally ambiguous behaviour.

Conclusion

Our findings suggest a pattern of differentiation, rather than homogenisation, exists among professional, managerial and clerical employees (Gordon and Heim et al 2012), one polarised into two habituses. This presents several challenges for alcohol harm reduction strategies. First, current public health messages are aimed at those occupying the traditional habitus, as they resemble most closely the typical 'problem drinker' (DoH 2012). Secondly, home drinking, particularly of wine, as an embedded social practice, a means of distinction and a source of cultural capital, makes its (over) consumption resistant to change (Williams 1995; Jones et al 2011). Thirdly, minimum pricing may prove ineffective for higher socio economic groups as scarcity may increase wine's symbolic power. Further research, especially of a quantitative nature, would be valuable in placing the drinking patterns of the two habituses into a wider context of cultural practices. This may contribute to a nuanced account of the relationship between cultural practices and the finer gradations within middle class occupational groups (Warde et al 2008). Finally, whilst cultural capital has been traditionally communicated by means of the family and education, the media may be a third source of capital transfer requiring investigation. However, reducing the harm of alcohol for aspirational and ascendant middle class groups may take nothing less than the identification of new sources of cultural capital and such may take a generation to achieve.

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